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Do you need to be baptised in water to be saved?

I have noticed of late that believers are still uncertain regarding water baptism and the baptism of the Spirit. For now, let us deal with water baptism. There is the opinion circulating that one does not need to be baptised in water, especially if one's relationship with the Lord is sound and healthy. Many have thus asked is baptism necessary for salvation? In other words, will we fail to inherit eternal life if we are not baptized?

From the start, let us make something very clear that when it comes to your salvation that you do not need to be baptised. Of the thief who hung on the cross next to Jesus we read in Luke 23: 40 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." 43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." The thief was never baptised. Yet Jesus said to Him that he would be in Paradise. So yes, you do not need to be baptised to be saved as demonstrated by Jesus. But, one also needs to understand, that baptism is of vital importance. Let me explain.

We need to remember salvation comes from our faith in Jesus and our relationship with Him. It says for example in "Acts 16:31: So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" and also Romans 10: 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

But as we will explore briefly, baptism will not save us. Yet at the same time, baptism is surely the testimony we deliver in the natural and the spiritual realm to declare we are now seeking to serve the Lord as His disciple. In Acts 2, upon delivering his moving sermon following the Pentecost, many of those who listened to Peter asked the disciple what they must do next once they believed. He replied: "38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

So how does Acts 2 and Luke 23 align? Very simple. Baptism is not vital for your salvation, but of critical importance for your spiritual growth and victory. The problem is one's spiritual journey with God does not end and begin with your salvation. The day that you gave your life to Jesus is but the first step on your journey to serve and follow Him. It is the first crucial step to be a disciple, but what follows is a million other steps of walking in one's calling and purpose. And this is where baptism comes in, because it is part of one's continuing sanctification (set apart for holiness), even though one has been already justified by the Blood.

For some Scriptures such as Mark 16:16 has caused confusion "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." And also "1 Peter 3:21: 21 There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but

the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Ultimately, this deals with the ongoing progression of our salvation. After all, there are those who believe the doctrine of once saved always saved, which is a false doctrine. We need to constantly obey the Lord, stay obedient, stay faithful and abide in Him to not only be saved but to overcome and stay the course until the end we are called home. Baptism is thus part and parcel of our spiritual journey of sanctification and striving for glorification.

So while baptism of the water is not necessary for your salvation, it is of utmost NECESSITY for your spiritual growth and your journey with God. After all, was Jesus baptised in water? Yes. Jesus did not get baptised to be saved, but it was imperative as a manifested action of separating Himself from the world to serve His Father. John the Baptist after all was prepared from birth to deliver a message of repentance and to usher in true baptism. Repentance and turning away from your old life is the manifested message and declaration of baptism. Such a baptism was not merely a ritual, but a sign of a disciple who truly seeks to follow Christ as the Lamb slain for the world. John baptised Jesus, so why would we think baptism is not of great importance to God? Indeed the baptism of water followed the baptism of the Spirit, and so Jesus started his earthly ministry as the Son of God. So if Jesus was baptised in water, why do we think we do not need to be baptised in our continuing service, pursuit and dedication to God?

Baptism of water is simply our commitment to God to lead a new life, washing away the old ways, so that we can be worshippers in spirit and in truth. Let us understand Jesus allowed Himself to be baptized to show His disciples it is part and parcel of our spiritual walk, for it is about committing your life to the Lord and making a declaration you wish to serve Him and His Kingdom. It follows our salvation as our commitment to what Jesus said in “Luke 9:23: Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

You see, God has made it simple for us to follow His plan of salvation. What God requires from us to be saved is to believe in His Son Jesus Christ, repent of our sins, and commit our life to Him, which is physical but also spiritually displayed by us getting into the water and being baptized (immersed) to have Him forgive our sins and be born again in this manner. Baptism has caused much debate, but as mentioned, Jesus Himself was baptized by the immersion of water. It was after all John the Baptist who was stunned when Jesus came to Him for baptism – and even though this was the Son of God. Jesus was simply showing the importance to John and the disciples of Him throughout the ages of the significance of the baptism which is the separation from the old and the new.

When it comes to baptism by water, theological arguments have caused us to miss the spiritual principle of this action – it has never been something that has been bound by the physical but it speaks of our spiritual desire and hunger to draw closer to God and to draw closer to His beauty and divinity. The most important reason we have been called to be baptized or to be immersed is to reinforce the Bible's message of separation. As believers, we have been called out of darkness into the Light of Jesus. He called us to be His precious people. 1 Peter 2:9 (New King James Version): But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His

own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.

No matter how you look at it, the water baptism offers the believer the remarkable gift of purity and holiness. And baptism is not a New Testament concept. In Jewish culture, the ritual immersion in water is carried out in a mikvah, which is a Hebrew word meaning gathering of waters. For the observant Jew, the mikvah personifies both the womb and the grave and consequently, rebirth. It is regarded as a pure, unadulterated avenue of connection with God; and for that reason, it is a place where hope is reawakened and strengthened. Indeed, this also applies for the baptism of the believer – for the water is a rebirth, and as we emerge from the water we emerge from death unto life and from hopelessness to glory.

Some may argue that the Apostle Paul seemingly was never baptised in the water. Acts 22 actually records his baptism in the Spirit, not in water. Yet this does not mean that Paul was not baptised in water. After all, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1:15-17 that Paul water Stephanus' household. He had also established the church in Corinth, and the people there were baptized as a result (Acts 18:8). He later taught that baptism is essential to come into Christ and into His death (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians. 3:27).

So is baptism important for salvation? No. Is it important for our spiritual walk with God? Yes, of utmost importance. So you can therefore say that baptism is a natural and spiritual outflow of the saved. So if you are saved, you will then be baptised. Thus, baptism becomes a living testimony of one's commitment and love towards God. Are you saved? Then you will wish to be baptised, if not already. If not, it is of great importance in your drawing nearer to God, and truly establishing God as the Lord and God of your life.

Addressing infant baptism

Let us understand the word baptism comes from the Greek word "baptizos" which means to "wash or immerse." This Greek concept is derived from the Hebrew term "t'vilah." It is thus true that according to the Word, demonstrated by Jesus Himself, baptism is the immersion into water for our entire being to be renewed [as it prepares the way for the Holy Spirit and a closer walk with Father and Son], just not our mind as demonstrated by the sprinkling of water.

So baptism is about immersion, and it is about willingly making a decision and a self-commitment to serve the Lord. This is why you cannot baptize an infant, for an infant cannot yet make that choice. You can merely dedicate an infant to the Lord, but the infant when grown up needs to make a spiritual decision to be baptized by laying down his or her life for the Lord.

The most important reason we have been called to be baptized or to be immersed is to reinforce the Bible's message of separation. As believers, we have been called out of darkness into the Light of Jesus. He called us as His precious people. 1 Peter 2:9 (New King James Version): "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." An infant cannot choose willingly such a path of separation, only when you are older and can truly discern between right and wrong, be it morally or spiritually.

In the Old Testament, God gave His promises to Abraham and his children. God made a covenant with Abraham and his offspring, the nation of Israel. Children were included in that covenant. Jesus brought the new covenant. So yes, we can dedicate children to service of the Lord, but they need to eventually testify to their faith before they are properly baptised.

It may seem that infant baptisms (not dedications) became more popular as the church conquered the pagan world. With it there was the rise of the understanding of original sin and the belief that baptism washed away the stain of original sin. As early as A.D. 400 Augustine appeals to the universal practice of infant baptism as proof that the church saw infants born with the stain of original sin. We find explicit mention of infant baptism as early as Tertullian around A.D. 220.

Some even argue that infant baptism was a practice of pagan religions. After all, it is well-known that the Catholic Church at the time of the Roman Empire adopted the practices of pagan religions to "christianize" their rituals. This was to convert the heathens. The reality is that nowhere in the Scriptures does anyone ever immerse babies or pour or sprinkle water on a baby's head at any time for any reason.

When we look at the New Testament, the closest thing to infant baptism that we find is the reference to three "households" being baptized. In 1 Corinthians 1:16, Paul says, "Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other." In Acts 16:15, Luke reports concerning the new convert, Lydia, "When she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the

Lord, come into my house and stay.” And in Acts 16:33, Luke tells us that after the earthquake in the jail of Philippi, the jailer “took [Paul and Silas] that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his [household].”

It is significant that regarding the family of the Philippian jailer Luke reports in Acts 16:32, just before mentioning the baptism of the jailer’s household, “[Paul and Silas] spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.” This seems to be Luke’s way of saying that hearing and believing the word is a prerequisite to baptism. The whole household heard the word and the whole household was baptized. In any case, there is no mention of infants in any of these three instances of household baptisms.

Truth is, faith comes by hearing and responding to what we hear. We respond to Christ’s call to salvation through faith. An infant cannot hear and respond to such a call. As mentioned, we as parents can dedicate a child, but the child needs to make his choice one day. After all, we have all been given free will to follow God or not.

Ancient custom

Some might be surprised to learn that Christian baptism has its roots in Judaism. Indeed, baptism is an old Hebrew custom, and if one understands it, one will understand the significance of it and why Jesus Himself was baptized. During Jesus' time, as today in Israel, baptism was the immersion into a water bath called a mikvah. The word 'mikvah' means a pool of living water that was used for ritual purification. This procedure is called tevillah [t'vilah], which means immersion.

Before John the Baptist came preaching "repent and be baptized", immersion was thus already an accepted practice in the life of the Hebrew people. As John the Baptist stood in the Jordan River, he wasn't doing anything radical or new. T'vilah (immersion) was part of the Biblical faith before Jesus came. Immersion or baptism still remains to be seen as the "gateway" into being set apart unto the Lord spiritually.

The power of immersion was thus seen by the Hebrews as something that cleanses the spiritually unclean and brings about healing and restoration. Throughout the Old Testament, "baptism" or cleansing by water was a central part in dealing with uncleanness. For example, the leper would go through washing rituals (Leviticus 14) not for physical cleansing but spiritual cleansing. Like Naaman who immersed seven times and was healed in the Jordan River, the immersion completed the healing process for leprosy. The priests also went through immersions in preparation for temple service (Leviticus 16). The same concept of cleansing and healing from our old ways and our old nature is carried over to the New Testament.

The method of baptism during Biblical times was different than today. The person would first wash and make sure he was physically clean. Then he would walk into the water by himself and squat down into the fetal position. This was usually done three times and was witnessed by someone who stood nearby to make sure the immersing person was completely covered by the water. This "witness" would declare the immersion complete "in the Name" or "as a follower" of Jesus.

According to Jewish law, the immersion had to have a required witness. In several New Testament references such as I Corinthians 1:13, 15; Matthew 21:25; Acts 1:22; and Acts 19:3 we see early baptism mentioned in conjunction with the name of individuals such as John and Paul. Still today, not only does God as Father, Son and Spirit bear witness to the baptism, but someone should bear witness to declare the baptism valid in the spiritual and the natural.

Brides in ancient Israel, as well as brides in Israel today, experienced a mikvah before her wedding. This water immersion is part of the Bride's physical and spiritual preparation for the wedding ceremony. The mikvah represents a separation from the old life to a new life.

The need for cleansing and making holy is therefore clear through the many types of washing connected with the Temple worship. For example, in Bible times, the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, was the place of God's presence. A people could only approach the Most High at these

places, and only if they were ritually clean. The unclean were cut off from worship until their condition had been dealt with.

Just so, we as the Bride of Christ also have to experience our mikvah, which is being baptised in water and in Spirit while also being cleansed by the Word of God. Our baptism of water and Spirit is indeed our separation from the old life so that we may be betrothed as a new creation unto God. Mark 16:16: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe, will be condemned." How we need to be set apart unto God so that we may be found ready as the Bride for the Bridegroom!

The baptism, therefore, remains a question of life and death and a cleansing from this unclean world and unclean ways. It is a time when new life is given and actions reflect inward change.

A testimony of the Trinity

One area where we see the confusion around the Oneness doctrine (Jesus only) is with the baptism. The Oneness doctrine argues the Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit does not exist. Some will say we must only baptise in the Name of Jesus, for He is God. However, Jesus taught the proper form of baptism is in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as designated in Matthew 28:19.

But why do we see so many instances in the New Testament where people were baptized "in Jesus' name"? It says for example in Acts 2:38, "And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" And also Acts 10:48, "And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days."

However, when pondering all of this, the Lord spoke the following verse in my spirit: 1 John 5: 6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. 7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. 8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

The baptism is about spiritual recognition. All three persons of the Godhead have to agree because even though God is ONE, there are three persons who all play an important role. To only baptize in the name of Jesus is NOT to recognise the presence and reality of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The disciples would have spoken about the baptism in the name of Jesus, for they simply wanted the Jewish people to understand that this deals with the New Covenant and not the old covenant of ritual cleansing. The disciples would have talked about the baptism in the name of Jesus to effectively indicate the gulf between physical Law and Grace. But when they baptised, it was most likely in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Baptism is about recognition. To be baptized in the name of the Father, or unto the Father, means publicly, by a significant rite, to receive his system of religion; to bind the soul to obey his laws; to be devoted to him; to receive, as the guide and comforter of the life, his instructions, and to trust to his promises. To be baptized unto the Son, in like manner, is to receive him as the Messiah - our Prophet, Priest, and King - to submit to his laws, and to receive him as a Saviour.

To be baptized unto the Holy Spirit is to receive him publicly as the Sanctifier, Comforter, and Guide of the soul. The meaning, then, may thus be expressed: baptizing them unto the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by a solemn profession of the only true faith, and by a solemn consecration to the service of the sacred Trinity.

One may argue that the will or authority of the three persons of the Godhead is the same, for they are completely in harmony and united in will. What one authorizes is what the others authorize. What one says to do is what the others say to do. But there is order in the Trinity and there is order between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is order for God works as the Trinity for the Trinity is God.

Acts 19:9 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 2 he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. 7 Now the men were about twelve in all.

Acts 19 speaks of the greater work of the Trinity by baptism. Many considered in the day that the baptism of John as being similar to a ritual cleansing, which sets one apart for ministry [priestly service]. What they failed to understand is that the true purpose of the baptism in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was to bind that person to the Kingdom of Heaven under the New Covenant of Grace sealed by the Blood which allows for the Holy Spirit to renew a man's spirit. This is the baptism in the authority of Jesus.

Remember, when people were being baptized that they did it by calling on Jesus' name (Acts 22:16), which is what we are supposed to do. That is why they were calling upon Jesus who has all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18). The church is supposed to "call upon the name of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:2) because it is by His authority (John 1:12) that we Christians have the hope and right of forgiveness of sins and adoption as His children (Rom. 8:15). We baptize in thus in the authority of the Lord, of more specifically the authority of Jesus {which comes from the Father}, but when we baptize we give the Trinity the glory and honour.

When the Lord Jesus Christ commanded the disciples to baptize, He gave them instructions how to baptize a person. The disciples obeyed the Lord and baptised "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The event was recorded as "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" to mean that they were giving water baptism in the authority given to them by the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we read thus they baptized in the name of Jesus, it was simply a recording of the information. God's word will not contradict in itself, but the devil will try to confuse people as he confused Eve. If we love the truth, we will not believe the lies of the devil.

"Acts 19:2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized?" We read here that certain people had not even heard the name of the Holy Spirit. The truth is that if they have not heard the name of the Holy Spirit, they have not taken the true baptism.

The true baptism is the one given in the name of the Holy Spirit along with the name of the Father and the Son. That is, they were not baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The book of Acts records the incident as "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" because they were giving the baptism in the authority that Jesus Christ has given them. "Acts 19:4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." According to this verse, John the Baptist baptized people by mentioning just the name of Jesus Christ only. This baptism is called the baptism of repentance. This baptism was the 'Jesus only baptism' and was done away with because the purpose of the ministry was only to prepare the way of the Lord Jesus Christ. In short, John the Baptist gave Jesus only baptism, which is obsolete.

The disciples of Jesus Christ baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Ghost. We need to always obey the teachings of Jesus; otherwise, we get side-tracked and lost along the way.

Who can baptise?

There is the general belief in the Body of Christ that only an ordained pastor, thus the clergy can baptise someone. This is, however, a fallacy. It is also the reason why the Body of Christ has become stagnant and not moving in God's glorious power and anointing. Because of this idea that the clergy must baptise, many have been disobedient to God when He said to baptise someone. We obey God, and not the traditions and ways of man.

Here is the crux of the matter. Are you a disciple? Have you been baptised? Then as the Lord leads, baptise! And yes, I am placing the stress on "as the Lord leads". Baptism is not some kind of religious ritual or an act of show-and-tell. It has very real and lasting significance in the spiritual realm. It speaks of God as the Trinity bearing witness to someone committing and giving their life completely and utterly to God. One needs to listen very carefully as the Lord leads when someone wants to be baptised. What is their motivation? For what purpose? Do they know what baptism is all about?

Matthew 28 says: 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Did you know the Great Commission is a call to action for the entire Body of Christ? Yes, we ALL called to be disciples and to make disciples. It doesn't matter if you are a pastor or have established 20 churches or only open the church doors for Sunday service, we are all disciples who follow and serve Jesus. We are as disciples and followers of God called to lay hands on the sick, to pray for deliverance, to baptise someone in the water and yes, even pray for someone to be baptised in the Spirit. After all, a disciple of God follows God, and such a disciple should be baptised in water and the Spirit. We are called to be worshippers in spirit and truth, and we are called to be active, mobile and baptizing and leading the lost to Jesus.

Did you know Mark 16 is also for all disciples? 15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will follow those who [d]believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 18 they[e] will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Now, consider what it says in Ephesians 4: 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."

So the five-fold ministry or offices, or whatever you may wish to call it, is responsible for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry. This means those who are supposed to be equipped are the ones who are to do the work or the service in the Kingdom of God! This included baptizing!

In Acts 8, we find the story of the Ethiopian who gives his life to the Lord. Read the story of how the Spirit led Philip to evangelize to the Ethiopian by sharing the Good News. We then read: “36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” 37 Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” 38 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

Philip was obedient to God. He did not first call his ‘pastor’ to set up an appointment for the baptism. He didn’t say that he cannot do it. He baptised as the Lord by the Spirit-led. He took action as a child of God. Are you a baptised believer? Then feel free to baptise when the Lord leads and guides. Obey God, because that is critical. If the Lord says baptise, then you baptise. Baptism should not be a grand ritual. It is something very personal, and an important step on the path of a relationship with God.

Have you not been baptised? Then seek out someone who you know is serving the Lord. Yes, you do not need to go to the pastor (but you can if you want to). Just go to a real disciple of God. They will do the rest.

And as the work of water baptism is for all disciples, so does the laying on hands to pray for someone to be baptised in the Holy Spirit also apply. Are you a disciple? Are you baptised in the Spirit? Then lay hands on those as the Lord leads and those who desire to be filled with the glorious indwelling presence of the Spirit of the Lord. This is also not just the work of the pastor, but all of those who follow the Lord in service, in spirit and in truth. Again, it is not about the one who is laying on hands, but about the ONE who is glorious and true. Baptism of the water and Spirit is never about man. It is always about God.

Baptism is all about Jesus

We are baptised in water for no other reason than to be committed to Jesus, to be separated and to serve the Lord.

Some will be surprised that Paul writes in “1 Corinthians 1: 7 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.” But he explains why he says this in the following verse: “14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.”

Paul is thus talking about people who were exalting preachers and dividing over them. Apparently, some were especially dividing over the preachers who taught and/or baptized them. So he says he is glad that he did not baptize any more of them than he did. And yes, today nothing has changed. Some would actually feel ‘superior’ or ‘special’ if they have been baptised by a well-known pastor. So the baptism does not become about God, but about being baptised by a certain man! And thus the one being baptised is not really sincere about following Jesus but is more sincere about following a pastor or spiritual leader.

In context, Paul is not saying baptism does not need to be done or is not necessary to salvation. He is saying that if he personally had done more baptizing, more people would be naming themselves after him (vv 14,15) and exalting and dividing over him. He was thus defending the Name of Jesus and standing up for the eternal Kingdom. Man would then begin to follow him, except Christ. After all, you would probably feel quite special if you were baptised by the Apostle Paul! It is well-known that many in the church still follow man because of their status instead of following Jesus, who is our Lord and Saviour. Thus Paul was not saying that baptism is unnecessary, but that he wanted as little as possible to do with this problem of division over preachers.

It is quite interesting that it seems he evidently let Timothy, or Silas, or Luke do the actual immersing in water. Again, we need to remember Paul had a tremendous authority in the early church. He had seen the risen Christ and had been commissioned by him to teach the churches. There was a risk, therefore, that he be idolized and that people become proud of being Paul's converts. And apparently, this misplaced pride had begun to spread in the Corinthian church, and factions formed saying, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas." Paul thus withdrew, because for him it is all about Jesus and nothing else.

In 1 Corinthians 3 says: "So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." In other words, as he says in 1 Corinthians 1:31, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

Paul tried hard not to do anything that would distract attention from the Lord Jesus Christ and from the power of his cross (1:17). And it may be that he discovered early in his ministry that when he baptized his own converts, they were tempted to boast about that. So he left almost all the baptizing for his associates to do, in order to direct attention away from himself to Christ.

You see, while we are called to baptise, Paul felt it was easier to hand over such a task, but not the preaching of the gospel. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe; baptism is a symbolic expression of that belief.

The gospel is the good news that anyone who receives Christ as Savior and Lord will be saved. Baptism is an appeal to God for that salvation. The preaching of the gospel is thus more important than the work of any man in baptism. This, however, doesn't say baptism is not of great importance. It is just that the one who does the baptism is not important. Because it is all about Jesus, and the one who is committing their lives unto the redeeming care of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What matters is not who baptizes you but into whom are you baptized. So yes, baptism is encouraged as a work by all disciples, but it should remain about Jesus, and His work on the cross and the eternal Good News of the Blood that was shed to save all who believe and declare Him Lord and Saviour. Paul didn't dismiss the importance of baptism, but rather the importance of the one doing the baptism. His focus after all was on Jesus, and not man, and always glorifying God above all.

Do you need to be baptised in the Spirit to be saved?

Just as there are questions if one needs to be baptised in the water to be saved, so there are questions if one needs to be baptised in the Spirit to be redeemed. As with water baptism, the answer is also that you do not need to be filled by the Spirit of God to be saved. The same argument applies for the thief who hung on the cross next to the Jesus.

But like water baptism, the baptism of the Spirit of incredible importance for one's continuing walk with God. For Jesus said Matthew 28: 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...

The baptism of water goes hand in hand with the baptism of the Spirit. While baptism of water is our commitment to God to lead a new life, washing away the old ways, so that we can be worshippers in Spirit and in Truth, just so the baptism of the Spirit empowers and equips us for ministry and to lead a life where we abide in the Lord.

Let us read Acts 19:9 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 2 he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. 7 Now the men were about twelve in all.

Acts 19 speaks of the greater work of the Lord by baptism. Many considered that the baptism of John as being similar to a ritual cleansing, which sets one apart for ministry [priestly service]. What they failed to understand is that the true purpose of the baptism in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was to bind that person to the Kingdom of Heaven under the New Covenant of Grace sealed by the Blood which allows for the Holy Spirit to renew a man's spirit.

Remember, baptism of water and Spirit was not an option with Jesus, but not necessary for our salvation. Yet it is vital for our spiritual life for we cannot continue to live an old life while we seek after Him. It says in John 3: the New Birth: 1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.

There is no greater process of being renewed than the infilling (baptism) of the Spirit (John 3), where Jesus says we cannot see the Kingdom of God until we have been reborn in the Spirit.

Truly, we cannot know who we are – meaning the way God sees us – until we can see what God sees. And we will only know who we are called to be in God’s eyes when we allow Him to show us and reveal it in us. But this happens when we embrace Him, pursue Him and truly hold onto Him until He blesses us with this insight and revelation. This comes by the infilling of the Spirit.

To be reborn in the Spirit, or in other words to be baptised in the Spirit, was according to Jesus of vital importance and if we are not baptised in the Spirit we cannot see the kingdom of God. To “see” means walk in the reality of the Kingdom here and now. We are on numerous times reminded that if we truly love the Lord, then we are called to obey His commandments and His full doctrine. And to be filled by the Spirit is of such a matter – it is not optional like fashion, but of dire necessity. And so the words of Jesus when He says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”, should jolt us to realise the absolute importance of walking in the Spirit.

We read of Jesus’ baptism in water and spirit in John 2: 29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ 31 I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.” 32 And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

Jesus Himself was baptised in the Spirit, and only after this momentous event did Jesus walk in the fullness His ministry. Jesus was indeed the Son of God, and He was the Anointed One to reconcile the world to the Father, but His teachings and miracles flowed from the work of the Holy Spirit. If Jesus ministered in the power of the Spirit, how much more do we not need the Spirit today as mere mortals?

Let us remember Romans 8: New King James Version (NKJV): Free from Indwelling Sin: There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the

Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

It is clear we are called as disciples to lead a life in the Spirit, not in the flesh. For by the Spirit we also walk in a life of knowledge, power, understanding, counsel and wisdom (Isaiah 11). We simply cannot abide in the Presence of the Lord without the Spirit of the Lord dwelling in us.

We also realise the importance of a disciple being led by the Spirit when we read about the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5: 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. It is therefore important for the disciple to be baptised in the Spirit, but also to disciple others by showing them how to lead a life under the guidance of the Spirit. For when we are led by the Spirit of the Lord, we walk in the ways, nature and in the glory of the Lord, reflected in our behaviour and character.

In our pursuit of the Lord and knowing our Lord, we must always keep in mind the basic truth given to us in 1 Corinthians 2: Spiritual Wisdom: 6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

We as disciples of the Lord cannot understand the ways of the Kingdom, or the voice of the Lord, without having the Holy Spirit. Our natural reasoning will never lead us to spiritual truth. Before we can understand the truth, we need our minds transformed from their natural, earthly perspective, until we can see with the eyes of Christ, hear with His ears, and understand with His heart. For true disciples, this is the ultimate pursuit. For us to therefore follow God, to live out our callings, we need to be reborn in the Spirit.

We cannot grow into spiritual maturity without the Holy Spirit. We cannot draw closer to God or conformed to His image without the Holy Spirit. We cannot minister and be servants of the Most High without the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit, we will follow a religion, and a not relationship. Without the Spirit, we will continually battle the flesh and operate under the dominion of the flesh.

We cannot be a disciple without being led by the Spirit. John 16 sums up the work of the Spirit in the life of the disciple: 7 Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 about sin, because people do not believe in me; 10 about

righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; 11 and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. 12 “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

Only through a birth in the Holy Spirit and a submission unto the Lord can we truly walk in love, fear, obedience, truth and glory. Only in the Spirit can we know the ways of the Lord, be empowered in the gifts of the Spirit to be workmen approved for His Kingdom, and to walk in His life, hope and faith.

It says in 2 Corinthians 3: 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. There is liberty in the Spirit, meaning we are no longer bound by the chains of religion, tradition, legalisms, and carnal matters. Indeed, only the Spirit of the Lord can unveil us by stripping away the bondages of old habits, and the strongholds of our spirit and soul.

This is why it so important to be a Spirit-filled disciple, for a disciple is one that follows in the ways, truth and manner of the Kingdom. It is our mandate to be led by the Spirit and to disciple others to be filled by the Spirit of the Lord. It says in Ephesians 5: (NKJV): 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit ...

Remember, the Church only got birthed on the day of the Pentecost at the outpouring of the Spirit, and subsequently in the power of the Holy Spirit the Gospel has over the last 2000 years or so been spread throughout the world. We are only reborn as children of God when we are filled by the Spirit.

The truth is simple – without the Holy Spirit we as Christians are lost on our spiritual journey. A Christian faith without the Spirit is a religion of dead rules and regulations and customs.

Without the Spirit, we will but continue to flounder in our spirit, in our character, in our daily lives and in our ministry.

Without the Spirit we remain but self-conscious, sin conscious, world conscious instead of God and Word conscious.

Without the Spirit, we are subjected to a time where we remain in bondage to the fears and the uncertainties and the perplexities of life, instead of being set free in the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Without the Spirit, we will but remain wandering according to our own self-worth and self-image, instead of seeing ourselves in Christ and being raised anew in the truth and reality of the Lord. Only in Spirit does our self-worth and self-image change into the image of Jesus.

Indeed, without the Spirit we “cannot enter the kingdom of God”. A disciple has therefore been called to walk in the fullness of the Spirit. In a nutshell, the Spirit of the Living God works in our spirit, He works in our soul (emotions, character, mind-sets, morals, values), He trains and equips and empowers us for service and He works in Truth and Power to set us free from strongholds of thoughts and emotions and behaviour that dictate our lives. The Spirit is the Anointing that breaks our yokes and burdens.

Without the Spirit, therefore, we will not be renewed in our minds and in our character to become more like God. Without the Spirit, we will stay worldly and carnally-minded instead of being spiritually orientated. Without the Spirit, we will remain in bondage to our emotions and thoughts and behaviour and habits, which have not come under the liberating power of the Blood. Without the Spirit, we will try to be in service of God without the anointing and the wisdom.

In the end, we cannot ministry and be unto service of the Lord unless we become spiritually conscious and conscientious. This calls for the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot become spiritually liberated to grow closer to God unless our emotions and thoughts and habits come under the Lordship of Jesus. This calls for the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot become more like God in character and in our morals and values while our spiritual man remains dormant and we haven't submitted ourselves completely to the freedom of the Truth. The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives in all its dimensions are interconnected and intertwined.

To therefore walk in the fullness of the Spirit implies a complete submission to God in order for Him to work in us, be it in our spiritual man, be it in our soul, be it in our ministry or be it in the liberating truth of divine deliverance. Only then, indeed only then when we have submitted completely in the all-encompassing work of the Spirit, will we be able to move in greater power and authority to do God's work for then we will flow in His will and in His Sovereignty. This is why we need to be disciples walking in the Spirit, who have been baptised in the Spirit and who baptise others in the Spirit by teaching them about the Spirit, and showing them how to lead a life submitted to the Spirit.

So while faith in Christ is the only and absolute requirement for salvation, the infilling of the Spirit of God is necessary and of great importance for our walk with God. John 8:47 says: “He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.” We truly hear when we are filled by the Spirit, who convicts us of the path to travel, who shows us the truth of the kingdom and leads us on the one and true path of the Lord Almighty. May we indeed seek to be filled by the Spirit of the Living Lord!

Order and manner

I have found there are certainly plenty of questions regarding the order and manner of water baptism and even the baptism of the Spirit.

Regarding the order, some may wonder do we need to be baptised in water before we are baptised in the Spirit. Acts 1:4-5 says (NKJV): “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” So, we need to understand John the Baptist first came to introduce the water baptism, which was followed by the Pentecost.

It also says in “Acts 2: 38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” So yes, proper order according to Scripture is it seems first the baptism of water and then the baptism of the Spirit. And this Scripture alludes to the fact that you need to be baptised in water to receive the Holy Spirit.

The question remains, is water baptism necessary for the infilling of the Spirit? We read in Acts 2: 17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.”

We must keep in mind that the same Greek word is used for both baptisms with water and baptism in the Holy Spirit throughout the New Testament including by such individuals as John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter, and Paul. So, we cannot simply assume that the word "baptism" in verse 18 refers to water baptism. And we have also established that the phrase "filled with the Holy Spirit" would have been synonymous with "baptism in the Holy Spirit." Therefore, from this chapter itself, we find strong evidence that the baptism Paul received was a baptism in the Holy Spirit, not water baptism.

Notice that in verse 17, Ananias states there are two things he has been sent to do. First, he has been for Paul to receive his sight. Second, Ananias says he has been sent so Paul would be filled with the Holy Spirit, which unequivocally is a reference to baptism in the Holy Spirit. Then, immediately following that statement, verse 18 records that scales fall from Paul's eyes and he gets up and is baptized. The logical assumption is that this Scripture is recording the occurrence of both items Ananias was sent to accomplish.

Thus, one might be shocked that in the New Testament that there is no reference to Paul actually being baptised in water, but then again, it does not mean he wasn't baptised. What seems clear is that he was baptised in the Spirit before water baptism, if he was baptised in water. Is this then possible? Yes, because personally I was also baptised in the Spirit before the baptism of the water! It was by the conviction of the Spirit that I was baptised in water. So yes, by all accounts one can be baptised in Spirit before the water, but when it comes to the order,

most of the time it seems to be water before Spirit because water baptism prepares the way for the infilling of the Spirit.

We must be careful that something becomes a tradition that quenches the fire of the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit tells us to baptize someone in Spirit by laying on of hands yet we first want to argue if that person has been baptised in water then we are overriding God's will to uphold our tradition. When it comes to water baptism or baptism in the Spirit, we need to listen to God. We need to make sure that our ideas limit the move and will of the Lord.

On mannerisms of baptism, therefore, the important thing is one always has to seek and follow the leading of the Spirit of the Lord when baptizing someone. At times we can allow a religious mind-set to stand in our way from doing the work of the Lord. Even though it is proper for baptism by immersion, at times the Lord can command that someone is baptized by simply pouring water over them while they are kneeling or standing. It is about obedience. So if you follow the Lord, you are called to be baptized and to baptize others in the water. This is the walk of a disciple, for a disciple is set apart unto God, unto His kingdom and unto a life committed to the Lord's Way, Truth and Life.

Some also wonder do you dip someone three times in the water, or only once. Some may wonder where you are allowed to baptise. Again, we must be careful that we do not become too religious, we must rely and trust on the Spirit to lead us. In the Jewish culture, the ritual immersion in water is carried out in a mikvah, which is a Hebrew word meaning gathering of waters. So a baptism takes place anywhere where there is water, be it a pool or a bathtub for example. In Matthew 28 Jesus tells us to baptise "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." It is that simple. Do as the Word commands.

At the end of the day, baptism is a very personal matter between the one being baptised and the Lord. Let religion not get in the way. If the person feels led to immerse themselves in the water among witnesses, then let it be so. If someone immerses the person, then let the Spirit of God lead and let the Spirit of God guide in order for the Lord to receive all the glory and honour.

Fires of the Lord

As we draw closer to the Father in union, so we draw closer to the fire of His presence that burns in the Holy of Holies. And such fire burns when we yield to the Lord, thus baptised in water and the Spirit of the Lord.

In union the fire of the Lord shines through and in us, marking our path and casting light in darkness. Just as a man that holds a lit candle when standing in darkness, just so does the Word and Presence of the Lord serve as an emanating light to illuminate our spirit and soul. When such a flame dies, then we stand in darkness and do not know where to tread. When we walk in darkness, we can't lead anybody else out of darkness.

Let us not be fooled or be deceived: such light will only shine when we constantly and with reverent fear draw closer to Him and seek to obey Him. Let us not be fooled to think that if we choose to do the things of the Lord and do the things of this world that the candle will remain lit. No, for the fire will die and then we will be stranded in darkness, ignorant and disorientated. For the Lord asks this question: what extinguishes any fire? Lack of oxygen and heat kills the flame. The Lord is the oxygen and heat. If we fail to obey and submit, then we walk not in His light. For it is written that if we love the Lord then we will obey Him.

Unrighteousness kills the oxygen and the heat. Ezekiel 18 (v 24-29) makes it clear that we must not be so arrogant as to think we can walk in His light and also try to please this world. This is confirmed by Hebrews 6 (v4-7). We will fall in greater iniquity because of such arrogance and ignorance.

There is a true danger for those who walk in unrighteousness even though seeking union with God. This simply cannot be. This makes a mockery and a disgrace of the Lord's death on the cross since we abuse grace that has led us out of Egypt. We must make a stand: Either live for the Lord, completely and utterly, or choose the world. The Lord's flame will only burn bright in us if we walk in righteousness. Such a path we can only follow if we seek true union with the Lord, but this requires obedience, submission and abandonment unto the cross and a willingness to die unto the self.

The Lord is calling His children to walk in true righteousness, in purity and love so that the flame can burn and the darkness be driven back. Too many flames have died or are dying because of the lack of oxygen or heat. Let us not be so arrogant. Let us be not so wise. Let us return to Him in reverent fear. We must be so hungry for His fire that we must seek to be baptized, so let us become like burning torches for the nations. Indeed, fire of suffering which will bring forth the gold of and none of us as believers will be purified except in the fire of inward pain.

Yet, where the baptism of the Holy Spirit produces the truth, so the baptism of fire produces suffering. This allows us to grow purer and holier. Such holiness and purity leads to a greater spiritual plateau, drawing us closer to God, opening the way for us to dwell in the blessed state of spiritual unity and divine love.

We need to willingly surrender and seek the Lord's fire. We therefore have to open our spirit, soul, and body so that God can examine the deepest recesses of our existence, entering into the deepest chamber of our spirit and soul. We will find a divine working of God's Wisdom, Love and Power to cleanse and renew us. We therefore have to move in faith, believing God is working to transform us more into the likeness of His Son.

In the Bible, the fire of God is seen as one of judgment. The divine fire is therefore the fire that purifies us through His judgment so that we can see God. The key to such examination by God and for the fire to purify is complete abandonment in soul and spirit and body before God (complete surrender).

When we abandon ourselves, we lay before the cross our rights, ambitions, desires, fears, weaknesses, sin, calling, purposes (our entire life) so that God will completely fill us. In abandonment, we allow God to captivate us, allowing God to be our true King, and our desires, ambitions and our calling comes in complete submission to God's purposes for us. Abandonment is our white flag of surrender, not wishing to resist God on any level or in any way. With resistance comes rebellion, so we stop fighting God, we but now work with Him.

The continual process of abandonment allows for God's divine fire to consume us, for we are now vessels that are submitted in the hands of the Lord. This fire produces an inward suffering, since God's fire reveals to us through Wisdom, Power and Love, our much deeper impurities, longings and failures. It is these impurities and the guilt and shame of our failures that prevent us from engaging in a far more mature and intimate relationship with God. There is therefore a painful inward suffering that we have to endure when baptised by fire, for we are confronted with the deeper evils of our soul, realizing that the dragons of the darkness in our inner being have to be slain.

Seeking the divine fire is therefore our complete abandonment before God, as we willingly seek to lay down our sinful nature for the sake of gaining God's love. Without the revelation of the fire, we will tend to examine ourselves inwardly. The problem is that we so often deceive ourselves, while we do the true effect of God's refining will never be experienced.

The fire of God both purifies and judges. When God's fire dwells in our inner chambers of the spirit and the soul, we are exposed to God's judgment. The dragons (sin, evil, failures) of our life are however exposed by the pure fire so that we can address them, in order to be purified and cleansed.

The indwelling fire involves then not only the complete abandonment of the self, but it also involves the complete mortification of the deeds of the sinful nature (Romans 8). To mortify means to put to death. To mortify the deeds of the sinful nature means to depart, get rid and overcome the sinful nature. God's fire grants us the grace, love, and power to set us free. We however have to face our dragons, and with God's love and wisdom, mortify them. There is therefore also a suffering produced by the process of mortification, for it is painful and direct when we mortify the deeds of the sinful nature.

Mortification is the process of going to the cross and nailing to the rugged tree our sins and all that opposes God. The cross is painful, but it is the victory over death. The cross is life and freedom in Jesus.

The cleansing and purifying fire purifies and mortifies, as we are forced to confront the dragons that dwell deep within us. Through purification and mortification (made possible by abandonment), we become holier and purer. To be holy and pure produces righteousness that produces godliness, as we are constantly refined to become like gold in character and nature (noble use to the Lord Almighty).

In such a state of greater godliness and purity, we are drawn closer to the Lord Almighty. We allow for the complete melting of our spirit and soul into the divine presence of the Lord, fully carrying the cross and denying ourselves. Abandonment, mortification and purification draws us into the deepest chambers of God's throne room. This is where the divine spiritual presence of the Lord is found in the Holy of Holies. It is within the Holy of Holies where God dwells in His full glory, splendor, and majesty.

The Kingdom of God is also within us through the Spirit of the Living God; therefore the Holy of Holies is within the deepest chambers of our spirit and soul. For us to dwell with God in this place of peace and love, we need to be cleansed and purified so that we can dwell within the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies we allow God to be the very ultimate centre of our lives, refined by His divine Love, led by His Wisdom, and driven by His awesome Power.

Seeking the fire, letting it indwell, however is not only a one-day process. It is a continuous process of abandonment, mortification, and purification. The suffering that is produced is therefore also continuous and painful, as we are constantly being deeply examined and refined by the fire of the Almighty God.

To seek the fire is to seek the deeper realms of God, but it also means surrendering to the suffering and living completely for God. It is painful to completely surrender our own desires, ambitions, and pleasures, letting God become divinely united with our spirit and soul.

Such suffering, however, must be done with perseverance and humility, as we continue to draw closer to God, in reverence, abiding in the love of God and the resurrection power of the Blood of Christ. In essence, God has to be glorified, and the flesh and soul mortified.

But we always have choices. We can choose our level of abandonment, our level of mortification, and how much we seek to be purified. To reach the inner chambers of God's throne room, we must never hesitate in our mortification, but let God's power and fire refine and set us free from our inner turmoil and dragons.

Is it only when we discover the inner path, which leads to God's wonderful presence, that the power of the external world in terms of interest and its power of bondage are broken. We must turn to God who is within us, so that God can through divine unity bring forth healing and deliverance.

Lesson on Baptism and the Holy Spirit – Acts 8

In Acts 8, we find valuable lessons on discipleship and on baptism, and how a disciple must always be prepared, trained, and willing to be active and mobilised to serve the Kingdom of God. In this Scripture, we find the account of Christ being preached to an Ethiopian.

So we read: “26 Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is desert.” Here, God through an angel gives a command to the disciple. He needs to **ARISE** and **GO**. When Jesus called His disciples, He told them to follow Him. They needed to leave behind their old life, arise therefore from their former ways and **GO** in pursuit of becoming fishers of men. As disciples of God, we are called to **FOLLOW** Jesus and **GO** into the world, to thus fulfil the Great Commission. After all, it says clearly in Matthew 24 when it comes to our mandate to **GO**, therefore take action. In Philip we find a disciple who was definitely following Jesus, for the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, and so Philip was now prompted to **GO** in order to be active and mobilised in pursuit of the Kingdom.

Phillip obeyed the Lord. Even though an angel spoke to him, it reminds us that we must always be willing to listen closely to God, which means we need to know the voice of the Lord. It says in John 10: 1 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

A disciple of God surely cannot **ARISE** and **GO** unless He knows the voice of God, for the voice of God leads the disciple in the way of the Kingdom. Jesus is the Way, Truth and Life, but we can only know such truth, such life and the way if we follow Jesus, thus know His voice. For we are living in a world of many different voices, including the devil’s, so we need to make sure, thus discern, what is God’s voice and what is our own, or the world’s or the devil’s. For this is vital to remain in God’s will, for in His will there is life and hope. Samuel was called as a boy by God, yet he didn’t know the voice of God. Just so, as disciples we must be able to discern the voice but also teach others to know God and thus to know the voice of the Lord.

It says: “And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, 28 was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.” Philip found the eunuch because he obeyed God and he moved as God commanded. Yes, the Ethiopian was definitely ready to hear the Gospel, but God needed a servant to go and declare the liberating news of the Kingdom. The angel of the Lord gave Philip the initial instructions, and then Philip was further instructed by the Spirit of God. How vital is not for the believer to be led by the Spirit of God! Thus to be baptised by the Spirit of the Lord.

It says in “John 3: 3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Philip was indeed about to see the manifestation of the Kingdom of God with God touching the life of this eunuch!

In Acts 1 it says “8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Glory to God. Philip knew the Spirit of God for he recognised when the Spirit moved and led him. And so, submitting and yielding to the Spirit, we find that Philip was empowered to be a witness of the Kingdom. He may not have travelled far as a witness, but he was witnessing to a man who had travelled far, so the Power on High – the Spirit – was about to empower Philip to be a witness unto a man who will take the Gospel to distant shores. Yes, just believe and trust God. Always yield, always trust for God shall indeed use His servants mightily.

Philip was thus prompted into action. He had to overtake the chariot. This was a matter of urgency. There was no time to debate, or pray, or contemplate! Yes Philip, run and overtake! Disciples of God have a call of action – to fulfil the Great Commission. Yes so many times we are sitting instead of rising, and we are not moving forward or overtaking what God has assigned or mandated for us to accomplish. Philip had to simply do as God commanded, for what God commands shall be. We need to always obey the Spirit of the Lord. We read: “30 So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” 31 And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 The place in the Scripture which he read was this: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth. 33 In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.”

It says in “John 16: 13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.”

The world is desperately in need of God’s Truth, and the disciples of God are the ones to share and instruct in such Truth. This is a process of evangelising and discipling, which is only possible when we are first and foremost led by the Spirit of God who leads us in all truth and who takes what is from Jesus and declares it unto us. Thus the importance of baptism in the Spirit. And remember, a true disciple of God is also baptised in water, in order to be separated in service to God. So we can only effectively share the Gospel with the world – thus Jesus – by knowing Jesus and His Kingdom. And this only happens when we are reborn, filled by the Spirit and led by the Spirit of God. Such is the way and nature of a true disciple – baptised in water and Spirit to fulfil the Great Commission.

We continue reading: “36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” 37 Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus

Christ is the Son of God.” 38 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.”

So often, we allow traditions to cause us to hamper the work of God. In this case of Philip and the Ethiopian, we might first want to phone a pastor to conduct the baptism, or schedule a baptism, or question the validity of the baptism. We might even be caught up in the way to conduct the baptism! Here the Eunuch was willing. He was ready. He believed in Jesus. God instructed Philip to be there. So Philip had to do the baptism. Whatever God commands, the disciples must obey and do as the Lord leads. We read in “Colossians 2:8: Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

A disciple does not follow man, but God. The apostles were constantly on trial for declaring God’s Word, and so we read in “Acts 5: 29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Yes, a disciple obeys God and not man! And yes, a disciple follows the commandments of God, and not the traditions of man, which forms religion.

Paul wrote in “2 Thessalonians 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” And what is this tradition that Paul refers to? It says in Acts 2 that the first disciples (verse 42) continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship. We must thus continue in the ways of God, thus His teachings, as upheld by Paul and the other disciples. Any other teachings or Gospel is spoiled by the traditions of men, and becomes accursed (Galatians 1). For this reason it says in “Mark 7:8: For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do” and also “Mark 7:9: And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.” Yes, we must never forsake the way or truth of God for the way or truth of man.

And so, at the end of this extraordinary tale of evangelism, we read: “9 Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.” Indeed, God as the supernatural God of the impossible is always present with the disciple who obeys, who is faithful and true to the Kingdom. Because of Philip’s obedience, the eunuch’s life was changed from ashes to praise, while the disciple encountered the power of God who placed himself somewhere else to continue fulfilling the Great Commission. Yes, there is power in the presence of God, and there is power in God’s love, His grace and mercy. There is power in obedience, in faithfulness and being willing, like Paul, to carry out the Lord’s will as the Lord instructs and guides.